
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1483

State of Washington

54th Legislature

1995 Regular Session

By House Committee on Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Pennington, Elliot, Stevens, Huff, Mielke, Johnson, L. Thomas, McMahan and Sheahan)

Read first time 02/27/95.

1 AN ACT Relating to the prevention and suppression of forest wild
2 fires; amending RCW 76.04.165; and adding a new section to chapter
3 76.04 RCW.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 76.04 RCW
6 to read as follows:

7 (1) The legislature hereby finds and declares that forest wild
8 fires are a threat to public health and safety and can cause
9 catastrophic damage to public and private resources, including clean
10 air, clean water, fish and wildlife habitat, timber resources, forest
11 soils, scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, structures, and other
12 improvements; and that it is in the public interest to protect forests
13 and forest resources by preventing and suppressing forest wild fires.

14 (2) The legislature hereby finds and declares that it is in the
15 public interest to establish and maintain a complete, cooperative, and
16 coordinated forest fire protection and suppression program for the
17 state; that, second only to saving lives, the primary mission of the
18 department is protecting forest resources and suppressing forest wild
19 fires; that a primary mission of rural fire districts and municipal

1 fire departments is protecting improved property and suppressing
2 structural fires; and that the most effective way to protect structures
3 is for the department to focus its efforts and resources on
4 aggressively suppressing forest wild fires.

5 (3) The legislature also acknowledges the natural role of fire in
6 forest ecosystems, and finds and declares it in the public interest to
7 use fire under controlled conditions to prevent wild fires by
8 maintaining healthy forests and eliminating sources of fuel.

9 **Sec. 2.** RCW 76.04.165 and 1988 c 273 s 2 are each amended to read
10 as follows:

11 (1) The legislature finds and declares that forest lands within the
12 state are increasingly being used for residential purposes; that the
13 risk to life and property is increasing from forest fires which may
14 destroy developed property; (~~that the department's primary mission is~~
15 ~~to protect forest land and suppress forest fires; that a primary~~
16 ~~mission of the rural fire districts and municipal fire departments is~~
17 ~~to protect improved property and suppress structural fires;)) that,~~

18 based on the primary missions for the respective fire control agencies
19 established in this chapter, adjustment of the geographic areas of
20 responsibility (~~for the respective fire control agencies~~) has not
21 kept pace with the increasing use of forest lands for residential
22 purposes; and that the department should work with the state's other
23 fire control agencies to define geographic areas of responsibility that
24 are more consistent with their respective primary missions.

25 (2) To accomplish the purposes of subsection (1) of this section,
26 the department shall establish a procedure to clarify its geographic
27 areas of responsibility. The areas of department protection shall be
28 called forest protection zones. The forest protection zones shall
29 include all forest land which the department is obligated to protect
30 but shall not include forest land within rural fire districts or
31 municipal fire districts which affected local fire control agencies
32 agree, by mutual consent with the department, is not appropriate for
33 department protection. Forest land not included within a forest
34 protection zone established by mutual agreement of the department and
35 a rural fire district or a municipal fire district shall not be
36 assessed under RCW 76.04.610 or 76.04.630.

37 (3) After the department and any affected local fire protection
38 agencies have agreed on the boundary of a forest protection zone, the

1 department shall establish the boundary by rule under chapter 34.05
2 RCW.
3 (4) Except by agreement of the affected parties, the establishment
4 of forest protection zones shall not alter any mutual aid agreement.

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